preceding long period of disunion. In this respect some of them rank among the most brilliant in the history of the Chinese. In political theory, in philosophy, and in literature and art, they were distinguished by great genius. Although governed in part by invaders, China made great strides toward regaining her cultural independence. The foreign faith, Buddhism, which had engrossed most of the best intellectual energy of the Chinese for the seven centuries between the downfall of the Han and the end of the T'ang, had now been largely assimilated to Chinese life. It remained an integral part of that life, but under the Sung vigorous thought of a very high order was once more to be found in that chief of the native schools, Confucianism. The forms in which orthodox Chinese intellectual life was to be set until the close of the nineteenth century were then molded,

THE FIVE DYNASTIES

The years between the final disappearance of the T'ang, in 907, and the inauguration, in 960, of the Sung, are conventionally designated by Chinese historians as the Five Dynasties. During these years five successive states arose in which the imperial succession is supposed to have been preserved. As a matter of fact, although the center of their power was in the region in which the imperial capitals had been through much of China's history and in the traditional home of Chinese culture, they usually controlled only parts of the present Shensi, Shansi, Honan, Hopei, and Shantung, and their authority was disputed by families who carved out domains in other sections of the Empire. Some of these latter states had their origin in the closing years of the

T'ang, when the central power was too weak to prevent division, and had almost, if not quite, as much right to the imperial title as did those whom posterity has called legitimate.

On the north and northeast, moreover, was a newly emerging barbarian state, the latest successor to the many which had troubled the fertile valleys to the south. Toward the close of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century, a people of Mongol tongue known to the Chinese as the Khitan or Ch'i-tan, a name which we have often run across in the last years of the T'ang, were establishing an empire in the present Mongolia and Manchuria. Their rulers later called their dynasty Liao. Until early in the twelfth